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THE

RECIPROCAL DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS

OF THE

MEDICAL PROFESSION AND THE PUBLIC:

A

PUBLIC INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

DELIVERED AT THE

RUSH MEDICAL COLLEGE

AT THE

COMMENCEMENT OF THE SESSION 1844-5,

BY

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## LECTURE.

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### LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

THE present occasion embraces a two-fold purpose. The first is to fulfil the usual custom of prefacing courses of instruction in the several departments of Medical and Surgical Science, with some of the considerations which suggest themselves in view of the important duties about to be entered upon. The second is incident to the peculiar circumstances connected with the present time and place, which give a wider scope to our reflections than usually belongs to preliminary addresses of this kind. Your institution, having already faithfully and successfully tested the public wishes and necessities which called it into being, may be said, from this period, fairly to assume the high offices and obligations of preparing the student for the honorable and responsible duties of the Medical profession. This event, which we cannot but think will constitute an important era in the Medical History of the Great West, is in a great measure due to the encouragement, sympathy and the more substantial assistance afforded by the community around us. The public, who have stimulated and aided this enterprise for the elevation of Medical character, and the diffusion of Medical knowledge, have been invited to meet with us on the first annual anniversary of the organization of the Rush Medical College. The second purpose which the present occasion embraces, therefore, is to manifest a proper consideration for the presence of those, whose interest and labors in the establishment of this institution, and whose sense of its importance and prospective benefits, have induced them to honor our invitation with their acceptance.

With reference to this double purpose and to the two classes of auditors whom I am addressing, I have selected,

as an appropriate theme for the present discourse, *The Reciprocal Duties and Obligations of the Medical Profession and the Public.*

It may seem that this is a subject which involves few and simple truths with which every one is already familiar. The duties and obligations of the Medical Profession, are, obviously, to accomplish the utmost practicable attainments in Medical Science and art, and to apply them promptly and fully to the relief of human suffering, the prolongation of human life, and the preservation of the faculties and energies of mind and body. This is a comprehensive formulary; and, it is to be confessed, that to treat of this branch of the subject more fully, would be chiefly to amplify and illustrate the topics thus designated. On the other hand, the duties and obligations of the public—are these not equally clear, and may they not be as compendiously expressed in a brief summary?—are they not comprised in the exercise of a proper consideration and respect for a profession, whose objects are so important and of so benevolent a character, and in a grateful reception of its benefits? Are not, the public may ask, these the limits of all that is in justice due from us toward the Medical Profession—all that it has any right to claim or expect from us? This I suppose to be the view which would be likely to result from a superficial examination of the subject. It is the view, which, we have reason to conclude, is generally entertained even by those who are most fully sensible of the elevated and humane character of the profession, and most disposed to render to the profession, and to its members, the highest consideration. I shall endeavor, however, to show that the real duties and obligations of the public in this relation, are somewhat different in character, and occupy a wider range than is generally considered. The true merits of the subject are, as it seems to me, not always sufficiently apprehended by the public, and that this is the sole reason why certain claims of which I shall speak have been overlooked, and too often neglected, I entertain not the least doubt.

I shall assume, as facts conceded on all sides, that the Medical Profession is based on useful and philanthropic principles, that it involves departments of science which are real and progressive, and that its results are pre-eminently



salutary and desirable. There are, at least, probably none present who would ask for arguments to sustain these positions. The train of thought to which attention is particularly invited, is opened by the inquiry, how far is the public concerned in, and responsible for the complete accomplishment of the legitimate objects and duties of the Medical Profession, recognizing no ground of dispute or skepticism as to the nature of both?

That the public welfare is by far the greater, and, in fact, the chief end of the progress of the Medical Sciences and improvements in their practical application, will not, of course, be denied. This is not only the motive but the measure of scientific advancement. The members of the Medical Profession enjoy individual participation in these results, only in common with the community. The gratifications experienced by the consciousness of personal attainments and the contemplation of scientific truth; the delights flowing from the exercise of skill to perform acts of humanity; the distinctions of pre-eminent qualifications; and, lastly, the pecuniary rewards which professional services claim, are all obviously subordinate to, and dependant upon the benefits which the public is supposed to have received. It is unnecessary to urge, that in the cultivation of Medical knowledge, and in the practice of Medical art, the public weal is, successively, the criterion, the prime inducement and the paramount object. It ought then, surely, not to be a matter of indifference to the public to ascertain in how far it is able to provide for, and promote its own important interests.

I proceed then to advance the position, that the condition of Medical Science, and the character of the Medical Profession, are in no inconsiderable degree for the public to determine and regulate. Medicine, as a science and a pursuit, is, or should be properly a trust especially committed into the hands of the public for its own benefit; or, at least, the objects of the science and the profession, to receive their full extension and complete fulfilment, require the co-operation of the public, not less than the energies of those who are immediately concerned in their preservation and administration.

This statement, however it may strike those to whom it



is now addressed, has certainly, never, as yet, been appreciated in its full force by the community at large. That it is founded in truth may be rendered sufficiently apparent by a little examination.

What are the general conditions, essential to the progress of any department of practical knowledge relating to the public welfare, which serve to fix the standard of acceptable attainments at the highest point of elevation of which they are susceptible? A little reflection renders it plain, that the facilities for prosecuting this department of knowledge, the ability and disposition of the public to appreciate, and its refusal to recognize and reward any other than true and adequate qualifications, constitute, in a great measure, these conditions. To say that these are the conditions of progress in Medical knowledge and Medical character, is only to apply a truth which is quite intelligible, and by no means overlooked in some other of its various applications. But it may be interesting to follow some of its more obvious details, and to contemplate their relations to the public, as well as to the Medical profession.

And, first, may be noticed the facilities for prosecuting this department of knowledge, or, in other words, the facilities for Medical education. One of the most important of these is the institution of Medical Schools. That these are, at least, of equal importance to education in Medical as in other branches of knowledge, must, of course, be admitted. It would be easy to show that they are especially and pre-eminently essential; but claiming no more than equal importance, here is presented a direct and effective method by which the public possesses the ability to determine the character of the Medical profession, and thus to exercise an influence greatly to advance its own interests. But what has been the relation which the public has sustained, and, still, in general, sustains toward Medical Schools? Has it been vigilant and active in their establishment? Has it been solicitous to endow them with liberal means and appliances for instruction? Has it indicated anxiety for their prosperity, and pride in their success? I speak now of the public generally throughout our country, without particular reference to this community. The answer to these inquiries is palpable enough to those who are at all conversant with the facts.



The public, as a general remark, has manifested great indifference to this subject. It has been regarded as a subject with which the public has little or no concern, and been relinquished almost entirely into the hands of the Medical Profession. The Medical Profession in this respect, has done much. The sense of what is due to itself, and of what it is capable of becoming and performing in behalf of the public, has inspired in many of its members an enthusiastic zeal, which often, with much labor and sacrifice, has contributed largely to sustain its dignity, honor and usefulness. But the duties and the responsibility of Medical Education are too great for the members of the Medical Profession to bear alone. The object is one which ought not to be left entirely to rely upon the peculiar respect and attachment of this particular class of the community. It imposes a burthen which should, to say the least, be shared by those who have a far greater interest in the results, who are to suffer in consequence of its neglect, and who are to be benefitted in proportion to its improvement, viz, the members of the community generally. I do not mean to say that in this province the public has been entirely neglectful of its interests and obligations, Legislatures have, occasionally, vouchsafed small and tardy appropriations, after long and earnest solicitations. The liberality of individuals has sometimes recognized this avenue to philanthropic expenditure. These instances have been rare, and, in their aggregate amount, insignificant in comparison with the magnitude and importance of the purpose to be promoted. But apart from this, the great occasion of complaint, is the general apathy which has been felt by the public with regard to the whole subject. There is probably no other subject kindred to this in consequence, concerning which there is so little inquiry made, so little said, and so little information possessed even by the intelligent portion of communities. It is customary for the friends of institutions for other branches of learning and art, to go with confidence before the public far and wide, and boldly advocate the duty of bestowing sympathy, interest and pecuniary contributions. But what success do you imagine would follow the labor of such an emissary despatched in behalf of a Medical School! Would he not be fortunate to escape with inattention and indifference without



incurring ridicule and contempt? Rich men sometimes bequeath portions of their wealth for the "diffusion of knowledge among men;" but how few instances can be cited in which this posthumous liberality has been devoted to the purposes of medical education? These questions are not submitted as intimating that there is any absolute hostility to schools for medical instruction, but as significant of the general state of public sentiment—or rather the absence of any public sentiment on the subject. I, for one, am willing to charge upon the public no more than a want of due reflection upon, and proper appreciation of the subject, as one in which it possesses a deep interest, and in which it is its duty, as well as its privilege to take an active and efficient concern. If the Medical Schools of our country, at the present time, are obnoxious, in many instances, to the objections which are entertained and expressed by a large portion of the medical profession—if they have been multiplied to too great an extent in some parts of the country, and come into a competition highly injurious to each other and to the character of the profession; if they are not always located with reference to the facilities and advantages for the acquisition of medical knowledge; if the inducements held out to the student are not always of a dignified and worthy nature, but belong to a mercenary spirit of rivalry—in short, if while organized as institutions ostensibly designed for the public benefit, they become mere schemes of private speculation and adventure; is the fault to be charged upon the medical profession, or upon the public? If there be, in any instances, occasion for such objections, it is because the public does not assume its proper and rightful province of guardianship and protectorship of this, as well as other departments of education, the fruits of which are designed for, and belong to itself. It is because the public does not exercise its right of co-operation, and the duty of assisting to give to medical institutions the ability and the determination to accomplish their ostensible and legitimate objects. If the public were to do this, it would be to apply a lever for the elevation of the character and usefulness of the medical profession, the effects of which, would be immediate, palpable, and beyond estimation.

In these remarks, I repeat it, I have not had reference to



the especial relations of your own institutions, to the community around it. I have spoken with a view to a general, not a particular application. If limited to this locality, I am glad to know their force and propriety would be diminished. It may well be a subject of mutual congratulation with the friends of this institution, the community, and the profession, that the public here, in this instance, has manifested an unusual and praiseworthy disposition to encourage and assist in the execution of an enterprize, which, it is not to be doubted, will repay, in its numerous advantages, a hundred fold all that has been, or may hereafter be contributed toward its success. I trust that the public sentiment with respect to the subject of medical education, which appears to have been awakened here, will have a wider sphere of influence than is embraced by the immediate objects upon which it is concentrated ; and that from this point may radiate a reform in the public mind, as regards its duties and obligations toward medical education, which will extend over our whole country.

The adequate endowment and support of Medical Schools, constitute one of the means of providing for medical education. There are others of a peculiar character, which are still more dependant upon the public. The sciences and arts of Physic and Surgery are both equally based on an intimate and thorough acquaintance with the constitution of the human body. This information can only be acquired by leisured and patient study of the various parts composing the human organization after its vital endowments have ceased to exist. I shall not stop to illustrate the necessity of this study, for the fact is sufficiently obvious to all who are qualified to form any judgment on the subject. This being the case, it becomes the duty and obligation of the public to constitute the study of anatomy a legalized pursuit, and to make suitable provision for dissections of the human body.

The position which legislation generally sustains at present toward this subject is truly anomalous. In its requirements for ample knowledge and its penalties for ignorance and mal practice, in effect, it holds the following language to the medical student and practitioner: " You must not fail to make yourselves acquainted with the construction of the human machine, composed, as it is, of: a



multitude of parts united; combined, and variously involved with each other; and if you are not found thoroughly conversant with this intricate pursuit, you render yourselves liable to heavy damages in a civil suit; but" it continues in the next section to hold forth, "do not dare to study the constitution of the human body, and the operation of its organs and functions, if you would avoid the pain of punishment by fine and imprisonment."

Mark the contradiction and absurdity! It requires a certain kind and extent of attainment, and threatens with severe punishment the means necessary to its acquirement! Our law givers, in this instance, appear to have imitated the unreasonable conduct of the Ancient Egyptians mentioned in Scripture, who demanded of their servants, the Israelites, *bricks*, and denied to them the materials whereof they were composed!

I am aware from what sentiment this inconsistency proceeds, and it is one which I would not fail to honor and respect; but the course of legislation not only exposes itself to the absurdity and injustice of the contradiction to which I have alluded, but it overreaches itself, and, in fact, does all that it can do to expose to violence the sentiment which it would preserve inviolate. While science and humanity, as well as the requisitions of the law and society, demand the prosecution of anatomical pursuits, *they will be prosecuted*. How, then, are the sanctuaries of the dead to be protected? By penalties if discovery takes place? This will never suffice. The enthusiast and philanthropist will hold but lightly the risk of discovery when it in nowise compromises his own self-respect, and the respect of the more intelligent and liberal portion of the community. The protection sought after, and required, can only be secured by making ample legal provisions for the pursuit. Those, therefore, who are most sensitive on this topic, are those who should become most deeply interested in the legalization of anatomy. The only question would appear to be, what provisions shall be made? A little reflection is sufficient to answer this inquiry. The objections and the antipathies to dissections are certainly not founded on any sense of actual injury or dishonor done to the dead body itself, or to the memory of its departed occupant. They rest solely



upon the feelings of surviving friends. Now, in the present condition of society, large numbers of unfortunate individuals die without leaving friends to entertain for their remains these feelings. Therefore, wherever legal provisions for this pursuit have been made, the bodies of this class of persons have been delivered up for purposes of science.

In my native State, (Massachusetts,) this subject has, within a few years, been freely discussed by the public, and acted upon by the legislature. The bodies of all who die in prisons and alms-houses are devoted to anatomical purposes, excepting they are claimed within a certain period by friends; and at the same time, the illegal prosecution of the study has been made felonious, with increased penalties.

The effect of this, in every point of view, has been most salutary. I am sure no well-founded arguments can be urged against the adoption of a similar plan in other States. The chief obstacle, I am well convinced, is in awakening public attention to the importance of the subject. I venture to hope that these remarks (necessarily brief as they are,) may do something toward accomplishing an end so highly important—important, it is to be observed, not especially to the medical profession, but chiefly to the public itself.

Related to the last topic is another, analagous in character, and of similar importance. It is not one, however, which claims any thing from legislation, but only requires the favorable disposition and co-operation of public opinion. I allude to examinations after death for observations, concerning the location, nature and effects of disease.—The importance of such observations for the general promotion of science, and for individual acquisition, can hardly be exaggerated. They have more than every thing else, contributed to the great advancement which has been made in modern time in the history and philosophy of diseases. No one properly conversant with the merits of the case will contradict the assertion, that without this class of facilities, no physician can qualify himself to know and practice his profession in conformity with its present condition, or keep pace with the progress of the science. But for these advantages, every student and practitioner, depends on the general sentiment with reference to this subject, pervading the community in which he dwells. I would then, if it were



in my power, appeal to every community—I ask those of this community who are now present, do you not regard it a desirable object to have among you scientific and skilful physicians? Then do not fail to co-operate with them in this, as in all other means necessary to the acquisition of that degree of science and skill in their profession, which is so important for your own safety and welfare. I know, that with reference to this matter, there are certain instinctive feelings to be overcome by the exercise of reason and philosophy. But to endeavor to overcome them, is (all must admit) a most reasonable and philosophical object; and by a little effort, reason and philosophy will succeed in the attempt. I would even advocate something more than a merely passive acquiescence with regard to this subject. The public ought to realize its importance, and not only permit, but require it from the physician as a duty which he owes to himself and to the community. It is by no means to be supposed that this kind of labor is ever prosecuted by the physician from a peculiar taste for such a pursuit, apart from the information which he expects to derive from it. The same repugnances which exist in others, *he* has to overcome; and these, or indolence, or indifference may prevent him from manifesting a disposition to perform such examinations. But he should not be able to repose so securely, as he now may, upon his antipathies, disinclinations, and love of ease. If he avoid this duty, it should be a reproach, and should contribute to lessen the estimation in which his attainments and skill are held in the community. Thus, would public opinion not only afford free scope, but give impetus and force to the progress of medical science; and as a necessary result, the community would not fail to reap a corresponding degree of immediate and palpable benefit.

The establishment of Hospitals and Dispensaries for the relief of the indigent sick, constitutes another mode of promoting medical knowledge. This is an incidental benefit derived from these institutions of great importance. The opportunity of observing diseases of similar character collectively, or in quick succession, in putting into operation regular and systematic methods of treatment and observation, of keeping minute records, and various other advantages which need not now be enumerated, render these charitable institutions of great utility to science, by the very means which



enhance their benefits to the unfortunate persons for whom they are designed. The more immediately benevolent objects are, however, of such paramount consequence, that it seems unnecessary to adduce this subordinate purpose as an inducement to their creation and support. Nevertheless, it may sometimes be useful for the public to recollect, that in bestowing their liberality for these objects, their charity is, indeed, emphatically and literally "*twice blessed*." It not only diffuses life and comfort to the poor sufferers from disease, and returns to the benefactors the more than equivalent in the "luxury of doing good;" but, by contributing to increase the knowledge and skill of those who administer the charitable dispensations, and in advancing the progress of medical science, the beneficial results are reflected back upon themselves, and actually may contribute to their own health, comfort and longevity.

I have thus mentioned some of the more obvious and prominent of the facilities for prosecuting medical knowledge, which combine to form one of the conditions of the progress of medical science, and the elevation of the medical profession. If it be indeed true, as must be sufficiently evident, that the ends and results which these objects comprehend, are of far greater importance to the public than to the medical profession; then, as it seems to me, the duties and obligations of the former to the latter, in so far as they have been noticed, have not been too highly represented. Let it be distinctly understood, that what is claimed by the profession in this respect, is not for the exclusive benefit of the profession itself, but chiefly that it may become the medium of returning to the public what it has received, with its value increased beyond computation. The rational connection subsisting between the facts which have been presented is so obvious that it cannot fail to be appreciated. But were it necessary to establish the truth which has been advocated by the testimony of experience, the example of France affords convincing evidence. France, guided by enlightened and liberal views of the importance of the medical sciences, and of the means essential to their advancement, instituted medical schools, sustained by ample appropriations from government, and gratuitously thrown open, with a generous hospitality, to pupils from all nations; facilities and materials for anatomical and pathological research were provided by law; the



extensive and well ordered hospitals of the capital were rendered accessible to scientific observation ; and what has been the result ? Every unbiased mind, provided with sufficient data for an opinion, will acknowledge, that to France medical science is indebted for a vast majority of the discoveries and improvements which characterize its modern history. The immediate consequences of the more complete discharge of the duties and obligations of the public toward the medical profession in France, when compared with other countries, demonstrate, in the most conclusive manner, the correctness of the assertion, that the public is, in truth, to be considered everywhere as responsible for the character and progress of this department of science and art.

But it would be comparatively of little avail to furnish every facility for the acquisition of medical knowledge, if the public be not qualified or willing to make a proper discrimination between ignorance and unskillfulness, and true scientific attainments. Unless this condition be added to that which has just been considered, the latter is necessarily almost worthless, or, at least, fruitless both to the profession and to the public. Acknowledging the correctness of the views which have been submitted in the preceding remarks, the extension of the duty and obligation of the public over the present topic, follows as a matter of course. The only room for discussion is offered by the inquiry, in what way may the appreciation of sound medical qualifications by the public be most fully secured and maintained ? This inquiry opens a field for discussion much too broad for the little space which I can devote to it on the present occasion. I can invite your attention to a few only of the considerations which suggest themselves.

It will perhaps be imagined that I would invoke in behalf of the medical profession legislative authority, to encompass it with restrictions, confer upon it peculiar distinctions and privileges ; and, in short, with the expectation of improving its character, and giving to it a more favorable position, to constitute it in some degree a legal monopoly. As an individual member of the profession, however, I disclaim all such views. If medicine, as a science and art, be fairly entitled to public confidence and respect, it should receive them as the free, voluntary homage of public opinion, irrespective of any extrinsic claims. The votes of Legisla-



tors can never add ought to its actual merit, nor can they detract from its real importance. It should stand or fall by its own intrinsic character, and upon this should the members of the profession be satisfied to rely. Let legislation do all that it can do, as the representative of the public will, to promote the cause of medical education, and provide every facility for the advancement and diffusion of medical knowledge ; and, for one, I have no fear that medical science, or the medical profession will require anything farther at its hands. Beyond this, all that medical legislation can accomplish, concerns the protection and safety of the public alone. Medicine will be only impeded and trammelled by enactments for its protection, and the institution of exclusive privileges. These are my views. Others may entertain different opinions. This is a subject, which has of late years excited considerable discussion in the community, the profession, and in the halls of legislation. What the predominant sentiment in this State is, I have had no means of ascertaining, nor am I informed what are the existing laws, if there are any, regulating the practice of Physic and Surgery.\* I have, however, assumed the existence of pains and penalties for ignorance and mal practice, for disinclined as have generally been the official representatives of the public, to grant appropriations for the advancement of medical science, and for its protection, they have seldom, if ever, forgotten to require, under the terror of heavy damages, that this science should be complete, and its acquisition practicable.

There are two obstacles in the way of a just discrimination by public sentiment, between the claims of true science in medicine, and the arrogant assumptions of ignorance or empiricism, which I will briefly notice. One of these consists in the erroneous impressions, that medical knowledge is essentially different in its character and means of acquirement from all other departments of learning ; that some peculiar, natural gifts are required for its prosecution, aside from the possession of acute and vigorous faculties ; in fine, that a person whose judgment and qualifications are of so inferior a grade that no sensible man would deem him competent to any ordinary business or responsibility, may, nevertheless, possess transcendent ability to cure diseases, and is

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\* There are no laws regulating the practice of Physic and Surgery in the State of Illinois.



to be trusted, unhesitatingly, with matters pertaining to life and health. If we were to trace this idea to its origin, we should perhaps be led to attribute its source to the superstitious belief which prevailed in the early history of medicine, that the operation of remedies necessarily involved the special intervention of supernatural agencies. The imaginary influences of celestial bodies, incantations, charms and amulets were subjects of popular credence up to a modern date; and, perhaps, can hardly be said now, even in some of their gross and palpable forms, to be altogether abandoned. It is probably a remnant of the same delusion, that proficiency in this science is so frequently regarded as involving conditions quite different from those which are necessary to other pursuits; that something intuitive, derived from inspiration or divination, or involving some species of legerdemain, is supposed to lie at the bottom of extraordinary skill in distinguishing and curing diseases. There are unprincipled persons ready to take advantage of, and to encourage this imposition upon itself of human credulity; and hence, it follows, that arrogance and assumption, allied to the grossest ignorance, often supersede merit, clothed in the plain, simple garb of unassuming truth and integrity. A little reflection, it would seem, ought, at this day, to satisfy every reasonable mind, both of the absurdity and injustice of such impressions. A glance at the elements of medical knowledge suffices to show, that it does not differ essentially from other sciences and pursuits, in the methods or principles of acquirement; that there is nothing peculiarly mysterious in its nature or objects; and that here, as elsewhere, the great requisites for its successful prosecution, are adequate, natural endowments, conjoined with mental discipline, an educated judgment, acquaintance with logical methods, and patient application. I have characterized the delusion of which I am speaking, as *unjust*; what can be more so toward those who properly recognize and aspire to the possession of true requisites, than for the public to esteem them as superfluous, and bestow preference upon those individuals who despise them? But the injustice does not end here; it reverts upon its authors. Would you secure the benefits flowing from science and skill? Then look for them where they should be found, and where they actually exist, both for your own individual advantage, and that the whole community may



enjoy the useful results, which will follow your encouragement of the true means by which the medical sciences are to be studied and advanced.

Another serious obstacle which the medical profession has to encounter, is the general ignorance of the community concerning the structure and functions of the human body, and other collateral branches of medical science, which would qualify the public to take cognizance of true scientific attainments; render harmless, arrogant pretensions; and deprive empiricism of the boldness now derived from its entire security in the general inability to detect its real nature.

The claims of Anatomy and Physiology as popular pursuits, from their inherent character, and various relations, aside from the present application, are sufficiently great. They must ultimately be recognized by the public. I do not doubt that the time will come, when of all the natural sciences, these will be considered of pre-eminent importance in all our institutions of education, from the district school to the university. But we must confine our attention, on this occasion, to the subject in its bearings upon the duties and obligations of the public toward the medical profession. And in this point of view, inasmuch as it must lead to a more rational and just appreciation of medical science, and of the medical profession, the popular study of the human body is calculated to exert a most important influence in promoting and elevating both. Let the period arrive, when it will be as rare for a cultivated or intelligent person not to be conversant with the general principles of the structure and mechanism of the animal machine, as is now the reverse, and there will be no occasion for the assertion sometimes made, that medical capacity and skill are but secondary qualifications for success in the medical profession. The way will then be opened for the full and legitimate operation of merit, as the sole requisite for professional success. The standard of medical education must then be raised to correspond with the more elevated state of public appreciation. All that the ardent advocate of medical reform now could desire, will then be demanded, not only by the medical fraternity, but by all whose influence and character combine to give direction and tone to popular sentiment. Waiving entirely all other recommendations, this alone is sufficient to render it highly important to the profession and to the pub-



lic, that Anatomy and Physiology should be incorporated; as speedily as practicable, among the branches of public and private education, and become an element of popular knowledge.

The practical benefits of a better appreciation of medicine as a science and profession, than now prevails, are sufficiently obvious when we consider its immediate effects upon the advancement of medical knowledge, the greater inducements for individual attainments, and the reflected advantages which the public will thereby derive. If time permitted, it would be interesting to consider these and other results more fully; but I must bring this department of my subject to a close. I will only add, that in order to form an adequate estimation of the immense importance of this object, it is necessary to become fully aware of the extensive systems of impositions which are practiced throughout our country. It is not strange, that on the subject of health mankind should be more credulous than upon most other subjects, and peculiarly exposed to deception; but surely frauds so palpable and gross, as they now are, could not be perpetrated, if the public were to become acquainted with the structure and properties of the living machine, which they are so ready to submit to every powerful agent, which, from purely mercenary motives, are offered by ignorant and irresponsible persons on every side. Empirical protestations would not at least, as they now are, be associated with absurd and exploded doctrines, which, pronounced in a jargon designed to be unintelligible, are propounded as philosophical explanations, if confident reliance were not had in the almost entire ignorance which prevails throughout the community upon these topics.

You may, Ladies and Gentlemen, have been disposed; before this, to remind me of the two-fold purpose of the present occasion, and the two classes of auditors before me. Let it not be supposed that I would measure the relative duties and obligations which the public and the medical profession mutually sustain toward each other, by the disproportionate space which, in these remarks, is devoted to those belonging to the public. Those which reciprocally belong to the medical profession, are by no means less imperative in their requisitions. As has been already remarked,



they admit of being condensed into a brief formulary, and afford less scope for extended discussion. Moreover, to amplify upon them, illustrate their character, and to consider their minute details and applications, are objects incidental to the course of instruction upon which we are about to enter. For a brief preliminary view, they may be considered as embraced in three leading principles, which should be ever before the minds of the medical student and practitioner.

The first of these principles is, that we are to fulfil, to the best of our ability, the claims of medical science. This is not a light and easy task. However little Medicine, as a profession, may have improved, as a science it has been constantly and steadily advancing. The ardor of investigation, the love of truth, and the ever urgent motives of philanthropy, have been sufficient to keep this field of knowledge always filled with zealous and competent laborers. It may be confidently asserted, that no department of science has been cultivated with more distinguished ability, more enthusiastic zeal, and more disinterested, untiring industry, than this. The consequence is, that the science of medicine has progressed with rapid strides, and, under the influence of the same causes, is still pressing onward. Imperfect and incomplete as it may be, the minute and extensive investigations on every side, the vast accumulation of facts, and the numerous branches of knowledge with which it is associated, render it necessary for the medical student to exercise constant diligence, and employ to the best advantage every opportunity, during the short period of his pupilage, in order to enter upon its practical duties with attainments corresponding to its present condition; and the practitioner, if he would satisfy the constantly increasing claims of his pursuit, must sustain unceasingly the character of the student, and never relax his labors in the acquisition of the new truths, and in tracing the new avenues of investigation, which are constantly being developed in the progress of science. The true object of ambition should be, not the requisitions of society, but the claims of the science. The former may be satisfied with superficial acquirements, and by ingenious tact may be beguiled into the acknowledgment of pretensions which are based on ignorance and assumption. In the present condition of things, public opinion is an unsafe and inadequate tribunal; and the duties and obligations which we owe to the public, are to be



fully discharged sometimes by disregarding its decisions, and appealing to the authority of science. Nor is the general character of the profession to be the standard by which to measure our progress and limit our aims. This is also an uncertain and unreliable guide. There is, in short, no other criterion or end but the claims which science prefers upon those who profess to devote themselves to her service.

The second of the leading principles which are to preside over the motives and conduct of the student and practitioner, is derived from the fact, that the grand and final purpose of medical science, is practical benefit to mankind. This constitutes, emphatically, a consideration involved in the duties and obligations of the medical profession to the public. The investigation of the laws and principles of disease, are not devoid of intrinsic attractions, of a purely scientific character. Truth developed in this department of knowledge, presents that order, consistency, and the evidences of providential wisdom and beneficence, which are so admirably displayed in every branch of natural science. There is some danger that the mind may become limited to this point of contemplation, and neglect to engage sufficiently in the applications to the relief of suffering humanity. Next to the responsibility which we have assumed of fulfilling the claims of medical science, considered in an abstract point of view, is the responsibility of following out all its beneficial and humane attributes. It is never to be forgotten that the business of the physician is philanthropy; and to be just to his profession, and to the public, he is bound to devote his ability, acquirements and influence to the accomplishment of every benevolent object, which falls legitimately within his proper sphere. Much might be said on this topic, but time will not permit; and I pass, in conclusion, to the third of the leading principles which this general view embraces.

This consists in the effort to contribute, in so far as we are able, to the advancement of medical science, and to the elevation of the character of the medical profession. I have devoted the larger portion of my remarks on this occasion, to the relations which the public should sustain toward the accomplishment of these objects. I have advocated the position, that the public is in a great degree responsible for their complete accomplishment. It is, however, by no means to be deduced from this position, that we are to relinquish them.



entirely into the hands of the public, and that no share of the responsibility rests with us. The duties and obligations are here, emphatically, reciprocal. Mutual co-operation, and joint action, constitute the grand desideratum. It is our part, in the first place, to endeavor to excite and direct the attention of the public toward the perception and application of the means within its control, to influence the character of the medical science and profession; to lead it to realize its own interest in the subject, and to indicate the most efficient methods by which these objects may be attained. It is ours to embrace all the facilities, which, by the co-operation of the public, may be placed at our disposal, and to secure their full and efficient application. The members of our profession can do much to remove prejudices which prevail respecting the profession, medicinal agencies, and the character of diseases. Every proper occasion should be employed to open the eyes of the public to the false assumptions of quackery, and the various frauds successfully practiced to so vast an extent. The real attitude of the profession with respect to secret remedies, and the monopoly of professed discoveries, should be explained. There is a very general prevalence of erroneous ideas on the latter topics; and it is highly desirable that the public should appreciate the disinterested spirit which induces the profession to adopt the principle of opposing all schemes which would limit the usefulness of every really valuable improvement. This is the foundation of the distinction expressed by the term quackery. Whatever is discovered by any member of the profession which is believed to be of advantage in the treatment of disease, is to be published openly for the information of the whole fraternity, and the benefit of all mankind. The effort to secure it for purposes of personal aggrandizement, and mercenary profit, is in a medical sense the true definition of quackery. The physician can also do much to render popular the study of the structure and mechanism of the human body. He can illustrate and enforce its importance. He may still farther promote this desirable object, by contributing communications to popular journals, giving public lectures, preparing and diffusing suitable books for the non-medical pupil and reader.

I have thus mentioned some of the duties and obligations which come under the present class. I can only enumerate

them; having already occupied your attention sufficiently long, I cannot presume to detain you with the remarks which would suggest themselves in a more extended consideration of these and other topics of a similar import.

Finally. The estimation which the public will form of the medical profession, and the consideration, respect and advantages which thereby the profession will receive, are dependent greatly on the personal character of its members. This reflection is too important to be omitted in this connection; but it is a truth too plain to require discussion or amplification. Let it not be forgotten by those who are preparing for, and those who have already entered on the practice of our profession, that not alone individual success, but the character and usefulness of the profession, demand of its members high scientific attainments, united to a prompt and active benevolence, elevated principles of honor and integrity, uniform courtesy and good-breeding, and in fine, all the qualities which should characterize the gentleman, the philosopher and the Christian.

It is common now to hear frequently expressed discouraging views respecting the prospects of the medical profession. I cannot believe there are any grounds for such anticipations. Let the public and the profession mutually recognize, understand and perform their reciprocal duties and obligations; and, for one, I entertain no fear but that the former will derive all the advantages from medical science, which are compatible with the plan and dispensations of providential wisdom; and the latter attain to that position of dignity and honor which is its rightful inheritance.



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With Dr. Hunt's  
compliments.

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